LOS BIBILIKOS DE ROSSMOOR

Stephen A. Rosenbaum

Long before nightingales
sang love songs
while Albert and Luiza
dined on plastic patio furniture,
conquistadores and sacerdotes
landed with their flags and crucifixes
to affix the names of saints
in the Valley of Mount Diablo.

Lo the Landlords of the Latter Day Elders
discovered
San Pablo, oh
San Ramon
O San Ygnacio, oh but
seldom San Anselmo.

Like colonial gentry,
they renamed conquests for Britannia
and Suburbia.
And built with sod and asphalt and brick
the manors of Rossmoor,
paving over the graves of Saklan Indians
and Mexican peasants

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1 The author is a lecturer at the Boalt Hall School of Law at the University of California, Berkeley. He earned his J.D. from Boalt Hall in 1980 and graduated from the University of Michigan in 1976 where he earned a B.A. This poem is a tribute to multiculturalism, multigenerationalism, and migration, with profound respect for the survival of migrant Jewish communities, and indigenous peoples and new immigrants in the western reaches of America.

2 "Los Bibilikos" is the title of a traditional Sephardic or djudeo-espanyol folk melody about nightingales. The song begins: "Los bibilikos kantan/Kantikas de amor" and ends: "Mas presto ven kerida/Korre i savame" (modern Turkish alphabet).

3 My late grandparents-in-law, Albert and Luiza Alfandary, came to California after surviving World War II in Nazi Occupied Western Europe. Their families had lived many centuries in Constantinople (Istanbul), following the royal edict expelling the Jews from Spain.

4 Mount Diablo, San Ramon, San Pablo, Ygnacio Valley and San Anselmo are all locales in the San Francisco Bay Area.

5 Rossmoor Leisure World is a gated retirement community of condos and townhouses located inter alia in Contra Costa County, San Francisco Bay Area.
with *faux* lagoons and putting greens.

No more the legacy of El Camino Real,
the mission bell is now a streetsign
In tidy white block letters
are names of vanquished tribes and
vanished Spanish vistas.
Reminders of scorched earth
and natives forcibly converted
like the Jews and Moors before them.

The blood of the
Most Reverend Holy Office Inquisitors
—who wholly offed every last infidel—
spilled into New World lands,
with every small-minded friar
brandishing the *Pragmática*[^6]
in pursuit of the last disbeliever.

*El Espíritu Santo*
*Santo! Santo! Santo!*

There is the roar of freeways
where once were *ranchos*,
and sandtraps carved out from
Indian dwellings.

Gardens of roses and
storebought Madonnas
and birdbaths are
shadowed by carports,
while thrushes
hover in bushes
*kantando, kantando de amor.*

The aged and pre-aging
come here for enforced recreation.
To tarry on decks of redwood.

[^6]: The Holy Office, or Congregation of the Inquisition, was the Catholic Church's judicial institution charged with prosecuting alleged heretics according to the *Pragmática* edict.
To showcase their independence
and bronzed leathered faces.
Their silver hair
and off-white teeth gleaming,
they are decked in terrycloth or
polyester.

Native Sons of the Golden West
join hands with Holocaust Survivors
and Knights of Columbus, Conversos,
Rotarians and Judaizers.7
And every Polly, Esther, Peter and Saul
goes shopping at Costco's in Contra Costa
and lunches on terraces
off Terra California.

They enter Rossmoor Leisure World
driving El Dorados and Sevilles
under portals that bespeak a friendly border crossing
where smiling sentinels named Rod or Tom
dressed only in their shirtsleeves
protect descendants of Don Rodrigo and Don Tomás
from inside neo-Yeoman huts equipped with video
monitors.

Albert and Luiza come here
to dream of Constantinople,
hoping to transform aisles of canned soups
and cereal boxes
into the isles of Marmara and markets of Stamboul.8
Even self-assured sentries
cannot stop the nightmares of
Amsterdam, Barcelona, Berlin

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7 Conversos is the name for crypto-Jews and crypto-Muslims, otherwise known as New
Christians or, more pejoratively, as marranos. “Judaizers” was the term the Inquisition gave to
persons allegedly spreading the outlawed Jewish religion and rituals.
8 Marmara is a region in Turkey; Stamboul is the old city of Istanbul.
or Aragón, Auschwitz, Brussels.
Townhouses at twilight
become ghettos or *juderías.*

Mount Diablo does not shield the
tombs of Inquisitors and their massacred.
The mission of Torquemada
and Eichmann’s minions
is not obscured by a mezzuzah
at the screen door.
Nor soothed by birdsongs
or supermarket Muzak.
At dusk a gardener’s walkman
plays a bass *ranchera*
unheard in the upstairs condo
where a high fidelity player murmurs:
*Come quickly my love.*
*Korre i sálvame.*

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9 *Juderías* were walled-off Jewish residential quarters imposed by Spanish authorities before and during the Inquisition.

10 The notorious Tomás de Torquemada was the First Grand Inquisitor in Spain and the equally notorious Adolf Eichmann headed the Gestapo Department for Jewish Affairs under the Third Reich.
GLENN MILLER WAS MISSING

Jacqueline St. Joan

Glenn Miller was missing. Somewhere over the English Channel, his plane went down in December 1944. Mother was upset because you’d been drafted, even with a wife and two daughters to support and day work in a defense plant and night work in the clubs, your teeth clamped onto the reed of a saxophone, chin tucked in, neck thrown back under the black and silver clarinet. Even in your tuxedo, you were slated for war. If Glenn Miller could die, you could die. I don’t know what it looked like, you two too scared to be separated. They say your bags were packed for many months. You had to be ready to go. Even the birth of a third child couldn’t stop it now.

By Springtime in Berlin Hitler was dead, or so it was reported. The war camps were being emptied of some, and filled with others. The boys were coming home, but no one was sure whether to celebrate or not. No one knew if you might still go or not. The war with Japan continued; scientists were speeding their experiments. Khaki uniforms crisscrossed the globe. Drop the bomb. Alternative plans on the political front. Pressure from the Allies. Hurry before they do it first! Americans were sick of war. In August were Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and I was born forty days later. In the hospital Mother counted all my fingers, all my toes, a baby whose father never had to go.

It’s as though it was set like a bomb fifty years ago, and now it goes off when the phone rings and it’s my mother calling to ask me if I know that she is leaving by air transport. She says, I’m leaving for the war, and her 85 year old voice begins to tremble. Will you take care of the children? she begs me, warning it’s a big job. She is making these last requests of me, this woman forever in fear of what the neighbors would say this woman whose faults I am sick to death of listing.

1 The author is an Assistant Professor and Director of Clinical Programs at the University of Denver, College of Law. Professor St. Joan’s poem was first published in WAR, LITERATURE, AND THE ARTS 204 (1999).
and won't.
I think
How brave she is, this warrior, packed for the end,
ready to give her all for her country. So I lie to her,
and I tell her of course I will take care of
the children, they are such good girls. I thank her
for the sacrifice she is making for us all.
I pray you'll be home by Christmas, I say over the phone,
and I mean it.
I hope so, she whispers.
I imagine her head down, phone to her ear, talking into her breasts
loose now in a loose gown. And then it is quiet.
I am lost in all of this when she starts to laugh nervously.
I've been sitting here with the other girls, she tells me.
Jane had a date last night. I just don't know why Daddy
hasn't come to pick me up. She begins
talking about you.

You over there on her dresser in the white tuxedo
with the black bow tie, your wavy hair so light,
your green eyes young in smoky shades of sepia.
And folded in the other photo next to you,
as you two were in the mahogany bed,
is this delicate young dark-eyed woman,
a farm girl pretending sophistication, a studio portrait,
something taken in the thirties, hinged there forever
looking out, not at us, not at each other, you have become
not even you, but Youth, so sweet so strange
to me to hear my mother now asking for you,
when the last time I saw you, your neck muscles
were finally surrendering to the pillow.
Then Anita wrapped your dentures in Kleenex, and
I tried to tie my silk scarf around your head
to keep your slack mouth shut, but the weight was too much
or the scarf was too narrow, or my will to force the act was too weak,
and we dragged home to tell our mother.
We lied to her that your death had been painless.
Now we conspire again to protect her
and I wonder if that's what you did
when she says she saw you just the other day and you acted
like you didn’t even know her. I would never
cheat on Jimmy, she says to me now, I love him so much,
but I don’t know if he loves me. Why doesn’t he
come and get me?
hers voice more and more desperate.
So I tell her you are nearby and she is safe right where
you want her to be, and she agrees that it’s all for the best.
She lifts her voice, calls me by her sister’s name, pauses and asks me,
And how are the children?

One thing I can’t explain is how I feel when people say
it must be so hard to see your mother’s mind fail,
when I feel like finally, finally,
all of her places and years come pouring out to me.
And I think it is me she tells these things to
only because I am here, and because

when Glenn Miller was missing and
she was afraid of war and so were you,
you comforted her all night long,
so that now, nine months and fifty years later,
when I walk through the door
with my trench coat folded over my arm,
her searchlights scan the dark waters of my green eyes,
still searching for you.

*Dedicated to the Memory of Peggy and Jimmy Sheaffer*
APPENDIX
CLEA CREATIVE WRITING CONTEST RULES

1. Entries are welcomed from clinical teachers, whether full time, part time, or adjunct faculty.

2. Entries must be original work and may have been published previously, but not in any publication with a circulation of more than 5000.

3. There is a limit of 3 entries per person. Each entry should be no longer than 25 double spaced pages using at least a 12 point font (except where artistic reasons dictate departure from this font size) and have no smaller than 1” margins.

4. Entries may be fiction, poetry, songs, plays, creative essays, or any other form of creative writing. They need not be law related.

5. Neither the author’s name nor any identification of the author should appear anywhere on the manuscript. Instead, a cover page should accompany each submission and should include the title of the work, author’s name, address, e-mail address if any, phone number, and home clinical program. This will facilitate anonymous judging.

6. Entries should be submitted to Robert F. Seibel, CUNY School of Law, 65-21 Main Street, Flushing, New York, 11367, and must be received no later than January 31, 2000.

7. Entries will be judged by an independent panel of judges. The judges will not know the names of the entrants, nor have any other information about the source of the entries.


9. If there are sufficient entries in several categories there may be several categories of winners. There will be tangible and tasteful recognition given to the authors of the winning entries.

10. CLEA will try to arrange publication of winning entries, and entrants agree to permit such publication, but otherwise will retain all copyright and other legal rights to their work.
The CLEA Creative Writing Contest Committee Consists of Nancy Cook (Cornell), Calvin Pang (Hawaii), and Bob Seibel (CUNY). Questions, comments and suggestions can be addressed to any of them.